Imperial Shake Co.

FAQ Regarding CCA Treatment

What exactly is pressure treated wood?

As defined by CSA and American Standards, pressure treated wood is a special product that has been placed in a sealed steel retort, flooded with preservative and subjected to a vacuum-pressure cycle of sufficient time to impregnate the wood cells to industry standards of established classes, retentions and penetrations of preservative. Usually, these pressure vessels are six feet or more in cross-section and forty feet or more in length. They consist of industrial pumps, valves, electronics and gauges capable of maintaining a fluid pressure of 125 psi minimum, so as to force the preservative as deeply into the wood cells as possible.

All major nations of the world, including Canada, have issued standards governing penetration and retention of preservative relative to the end use of the treated wood products. In Canada, we have standards prepared by CSA.

How many years will pressure treated wood last?

This depends on how well the products are treated, and whether the wood is kiln dried prior to treating. If the wood is treated to industry standards of retention and penetration, then available test and service records indicate that C.C.A. treated wood should last in the excess of forty years, even for marine or ground contact use. In all cases, properly C.C.A. pressure treated wood has been shown to outlast untreated cedar. Make sure you apply two coats of either a Copper or Zinc Napthenate preservative to freshly cut ends of lumber, since complete penetration of preservative is seldom achieved.

Is C.C.A. treated wood safe to handle?

Yes, C.C.A. treated wood has been widely used throughout the world for the past fifty years. Extensive studies of acute and long term toxicity effects, carried out by the public and private research institutions in North America and Europe, have demonstrated no special risks in the normal handling of C.C.A. treated wood by “Do It Yourself” builders and contractors. However, it should not be used in direct contact with stored foods, nor should any off cuts be burned, since the gases formed when C.C.A. breaks down add to the normal toxic load when wood is burned. As with any wood substance, a dust mask should be worn when sawing or working the product with power tools.

C.C.A. is the abbreviation for Chromated Copper Arsenate. The chemical reaction that takes place inside the wood results in a stable, non-leachable product that is totally odour free. The arsenate is in a molecular bound state; quite different from elemental arsenic and far less toxic.

Is C.C.A. treated wood toxic to plants ?

No. The product is defined as non-phytotoxic and cannot be translocated into the root, leaf or vascular system of a growing plant. It is commonly used in construction of nursery trays, greenhouses and is widely used in farm building construction, as well as fence posts, grape and tomato stakes and mushroom trays.

How do I know if the product has been well treated?

A chemical analysis of the wood by a qualified technician is the only way to know for sure. When cross cutting treated wood, visible penetration of preservative often shows up as a greenish - grey zone, distinct from the whiter untreated zone.

If you have any doubts, contact the retailer or treater who can arrange for an inspection of the product. At least 1/4” of uniform penetration is required for adequate protection and a retention of 0.25 - 0.40 pcf of C.C.A.

In conclusion, it can be said that C.C.A. pressure treated wood is a clean, durable, versatile building material that is unlikely to be replaced by alternate materials and one which promises a lifetime of worry-free use for any of your outdoor projects.

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